

Your Unborn child is completely dependent on you, its mother, for safety and well-being. Most mothers-to-be know that diet, rest, and exercise are important during pregnancy. What many don't realize is the importance of safety belts. Safety belts are designed to save lives. In Utah, one person is injured or killed in a traffic crash every 17.5 minutes. Of those killed on our roadways, as many as 70% were not buckled up. The leading cause of fetal death in a car crash is death of the mother, and fetal injury is closely related to the amount of injury to the mother. The best way to protect your child is by protecting yourself by using a properly fitting safety belt on every ride.



What Happens in a Crash?

During a crash, there are three collisions that occur, all in less than a second. The first occurs when the vehicle crashes and comes to a sudden stop. The second occurs when unrestrained passengers, moving at the speed the car was traveling, slam into the steering wheel, dashboard, windshield, or other passengers. The third occurs when the internal organs collide with other organs or the body's skeleton. In a 40 mph crash, the force exerted on an unbelted passenger would be the same as falling from a 5 story building.

How Safety Belts Work

Safety belts were designed to keep you in your seat and allow your body to slow down gradually.

During the crash, the safety belt spreads the forces over the larger and stronger parts of the body, such as the chest, hips, and shoulders. Many fear that pressure from the seat belt in a crash can cause injury to the unborn child. However, fetal

Pregnancy Seatbelts



For More Information:

If you have questions regarding safety belts and pregnancy, car safety seats, special needs safety seats, air bags, or you would like to receive an application for disconnecting your vehicle's air bags, you can contact the Utah Highway Safety Office.

UTAH DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY HIGHWAY SAFETY OFFICE

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State of Utah

Department Of Public Safety

injury due to this pressure is rare, occurring in less than 1 out of 10,000 crashes.

Safety Belts During Pregnancy

Pregnant women, as well as all passengers, should always use safety restraints. Lap and shoulder belts provide maximum protection for an expectant mother and her unborn child but the seat belt must be worn properly. Lap belts should be placed low, across the hips and over the upper thighs. They must lie snugly over the pelvis and below the uterus.

Lap belts should never be placed over the abdomen. The shoulder belt should be adjusted for a snug fit and be placed between the breasts.

If the shoulder belt cuts across the neck, try repositioning the vehicle seat or, if the vehicle has an adjustable shoulder belt, lower the anchor point. If your lap belt becomes too short to cross your thighs, safety belt extenders are available from most automobile dealers.

Air bags and Pregnancy

Air bags, when combined with lap and shoulder belts, provide the best protection from death and injury in a car crash. In a front end crash, supplemental air bags prevent the upper body from striking the vehicle's interior, such as the steering wheel or windshield. It is important to remember that air bags are supplemental. They are designed to be used with lap and shoulder belts.

If you are the driver, your abdomen should be at least 10 inches away from the steering wheel. Try repositioning your vehicle seat and/or aiming the steering wheel up and away from your stomach. If your vehicle has passenger side air bags, move the vehicle seat as far away from the dashboard as possible.

Late in your third trimester, it may be important to avoid driving if you are unable to move your abdomen away from the steering wheel. With or without air bags, a crash may send your body flying into the steering wheel with enough force to injure you or your unborn child. Check with your doctor as to how long you should drive.



Safety Belts After Pregnancy

Mothers are often seen riding in the back seat with their new baby who is placed in a rear-facing infant seat. Sadly, many times these mothers are unrestrained. In a crash, unrestrained passengers are thrown around in the vehicle and can injure or even kill other occupants. The force of an unrestrained mother in a 30 mph crash can exceed several thousand pounds which is enough force to kill or injure the mother along with her young child.

Make the First Ride a Safe Ride

Getting ready for the hospital should include:

- A car safety seat that meets federal safety standards and one that will fit your newborn and your vehicle. Infant-only seats fit newborns well and are easy for parents to handle. If you choose

a convertible car seat, one that can be used rear-facing for infants and forward-facing for toddlers, avoid one with a tray or shield, which may prevent you from securing your child snugly into the seat. Be sure to read the car seat's instruction manual and follow it carefully. If your child is premature, you may need to purchase a special safety seat or one that is designed to restrain small infants. Check with your doctor.

- A vehicle that can transport you and your child safely. Be sure to read your vehicle owner's manual which will explain how to secure a car safety seat with the vehicle's seat belts. The safety seat should be held tightly by the seat belt so it cannot be moved more than 1 inch from side to side. Generally, the middle of the back seat is the safest place for a child to ride. However, if you can't secure the seat tightly try a different seating position. If you own an extended cab truck, fold down or side-facing seats cannot be used to secure a child safety seat and NEVER place a rear-facing car seat in the front seat with a passenger side air bag.
- Receiving blankets, which can be used to position the newborn in the center of the car safety seat. Roll the blankets lengthwise and place on both sides. If you decide to purchase car seat accessories, beware of liners and pads that are too thick or ones that prevent the harness from fitting snugly over the infant's shoulders and the chest clip from fitting at armpit level. Thick blankets, liners or pads can compress during a crash, causing the harness to loosen which may allow the baby to be ejected from the seat.
- Clothing for your newborn that will allow the harness to be placed snugly over the shoulders and between the legs. In cold weather, avoid clothing that is thick and never bundle your baby in blankets before you buckle him/her into the safety seat.

After you properly secure your infant in the car safety seat, then place blankets over the infant for additional warmth.

Remember

- Never place a rear-facing car seat or children under the age of 13 in the front seat of a vehicle that has a passenger side air bag. If that seating position is needed for a child under the age of 13, you can complete an application for disconnecting the air bag.
- Place the newborn in the car safety seat so that the seat and the baby face the back of the vehicle.
- An infant should ride rear-facing until they are at least 1 year of age AND at least 20 pounds.
- Children over the age of 1 and up to 40 pounds should be placed in a forward-facing car seat and children 40 to 80 pounds and about 8 years of age should ride in a belt-positioning booster seat.
- Never ride with your child on your lap.
- If you must feed or tend to the newborn, pull the vehicle into a safe place and make sure the vehicle comes to a complete stop before unbuckling yourself or your infant.
- Make sure everyone buckles up on every ride.